

15 April 2004

MURGITROYD
& COMPANY

European Patent and Trade Mark Attorneys
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Your Ref: ---

Our Ref: P30316A/GTO/GRE/RPA

10/522471

DT01 Rec'd PCT/PTC 26 JAN 2005

European Patent Office
D-80298 Munich
Germany

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Dear Sirs

International Patent Application No PCT/EP03/08115
Coflexip SA and Coflexip Stena Offshore Limited
IP Title: "Waterstop"

This is in response to the first Written Opinion dated 25 February 2004.

The Written Opinion sets out that in the view of the document cited in the International Search Report dated 5 November 2003, the invention, as defined in at least some of the Claims, does not meet the criteria mentioned in Article 33(i) PCT.

Reconsideration of the Reasoned Statement under Rule 66.2(a)(ii) is requested in light of the following comments.

Tough G et al: Innovations key freed pipe-in-pipe flowline for gulf deepwater Project

Citation D1, an article entitled *Innovation key reeled pipe-in-pipe flowline for gulf deepwater Project* (Penwell Publishing Co. Tulsa US), forms the basis for a novelty objection against Claims 1 to 3, 13 to 15 and 17. The waterstops of D1 are energised by fluid when the annulus becomes flooded "ensuring that the seal exists in an unstressed state until activated...".

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INTERNATIONAL PATENTS, TRADE MARKS, REGISTERED DESIGNS AND COPYRIGHT

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The waterstop of D1 has an external lip in contact with the external pipe (or carrier pipe) and an internal lip in contact with the internal pipe (or flowline pipe). This waterstop is installed within the pipe-in-pipe structure in an unstressed state so that there is an effective seal when the pipe is manufactured. When the annulus becomes flooded, the fluid pressure on the waterstop body and on the internal wall of the both the internal and the external lips forces the lips against the respective walls of the carrier and flowline pipes. This force merely improves the existing sealing property, as disclosed on page 50 where it states that the seal is "energised when the annulus becomes flooded".

In contrast the seal of the present invention "under normal operating conditions is in a non sealing position which allows the passage of gas through the seal assembly". Accordingly, it is submitted that D1 does not disclose nor suggest a seal having all of the features of the present invention as claimed.

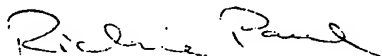
British Patent No 2,317,934

D2 (British Patent No 2,317,934) does not disclose the a seal which is actuated in response to the entry of liquid into the annular space. The seal in document D2 is actuated mechanically (see page 8, line 21 which states that "to effect the seal the bolts are tightened").

In view of the significant differences between the Applicant's claimed invention and those set forth in the above cited references, the Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the Written Opinion and a favourable International Preliminary Examination Report.

We enclose EPO form 1037 for endorsement and return.

Yours faithfully
for Murgitroyd & Company



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Enc: EPO Form 1037